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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CANBERRA 000855

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PACOM FOR POLAD PICUTTA

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SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA-ROK-INDONESIA TRILATERAL DISCUSSION

Classified by Pol/Econ Counselor Edgard Kagan for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

#### Summary -----

¶1. (C/NF) An inaugural trilateral held in Canberra on September 9 between Australia, the ROK and Indonesia resulted in a vehicle still in search of an idea. While the concept has strong support from the heads of government, the trilateral discussion was wide ranging and did not produce substantive results. The ROK would like to become more involved in Southeast Asia and Australia and Indonesia see this as a chance to deepen their involvement in the Korean peninsula. End Summary.

#### A Vehicle in Search of an Idea -----

¶2. (C/NF) A September 9 trilateral meeting between Australia, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Indonesia aimed to test the waters for a more structured meeting between foreign ministers or heads of government on the margins of a future summit. According to Dave Sharma, Director of the Indonesia section in Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Koreans initiated the trilateral, but a strong relationship between the three heads of government was the driving force. DFAT's Deputy Secretary and Ambassador to ASEAN Gillian Bird, ROK Deputy-Foreign Minister Lee Yong-joong, and Indonesia's Director General for Asia-Pacific and African Affairs Hamzah Thayeb (formerly Ambassador in Canberra) participated in the one hour meeting.

¶3. (C/NF) According to Sharma, the three countries discussed a range of issues including strengthening the role of the G-20, climate change, regional architecture and coordinating regulation and financial reforms in the wake of the global slowdown. Discussions did not lead to action items or resolutions. Sharma said he was surprised by the uncharacteristic ROK suggestion to avoid concept papers, or even an agenda, in order to pursue a "free-flowing discussion."

#### Motivations -----

¶4. (C/NF) Sharma noted that the ROK is looking to become more involved in Southeast Asia and sees Australia and Indonesia as the two logical partners. Indonesia, in turn, expressed interest in greater involvement in North Asian affairs, particularly concerning

disarmament in the Korean peninsula. Sharma stated that Australia would "not be opposed" to playing a greater role in supporting stability in the Korean peninsula, but acknowledged that the GOA's role is necessarily limited as it is not a member of the six-party talks.

15. (C/NF) ROK Jakarta Embassy Political Counselor Kim Gunn, who traveled to Canberra to participate in the meeting, told us that the initiative was the product of a long discussion between PM Rudd and ROK President Lee Myung Bak during Lee's March visit. Lee and Rudd hit it off so well that Rudd asked Lee to come to his house for an after-dinner drink, which turned into a free-wheeling two hour session that led to the idea of a trilat with Indonesia. Lee went on to Jakarta the next day and was surprised to hear President Yudhoyono say that Rudd had called to extol the ROK President and urge Indonesia to agree to a trilat. Kim said that President Lee had QIndonesia to agree to a trilat. Kim said that President Lee had personally told him to "make this happen," stressing his desire to build on his relationship with Rudd as well as build a partnership with Yudhoyono. Kim said that Indonesian MFA officials were clearly surprised by their President's support for the idea, reluctant to move forward but came around when it became clear that Yudhoyono was serious about the idea.

Comment  
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16. (C/NF) This first trilateral discussion was relatively informal and we were left with the impression that the Australians are open to future discussions, but not necessarily eager to take a leading role. It is also unclear just how motivated the Indonesians are in pursuing this trilateral given the strong relationship that already

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exists with Australia. Post notes that the idea for holding the trilateral likely grew out of extensive conversations President Lee Myung-Bak had with Prime Minister Rudd during Lee's recent visit to Australia. Unless the trilateral meetings find an idea to power the vehicle, future discussions may continue to be short and relatively insubstantial.

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